

# NORTH COAST 500 AND NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

## Outstanding Circular Walks

Pathfinder® Guides



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guides

# North: Durness to Wick



	Walk	Page	Start	Grid ref	Distance	Height gain	Time
<b>15</b>	Balnakeil Bay and Faraid Head	52	Balnakeil, Durness	NC 391686	8 miles (12.8km)	850ft (260m)	4½ hrs
<b>16</b>	Ben Hope	55	Muiseal, Strath More	NC 461476	5 to 9½ miles (8 to 15.2km)	3,020 to 3,350ft (920 to 1,020m)	4 to 7 hrs
<b>17</b>	Castle Varrich	58	Tongue	NC 591566	2 miles (3.2km)	395ft (120m)	1¼ hrs
<b>18</b>	Torrisdale Bay	60	Torrisdale	NC 680611	4½ miles (7.2km)	510ft (155m)	2½ hrs
<b>19</b>	Castletown Flagstone Trail	62	Castletown	ND 195685	3 miles (4.8km)	85ft (25m)	1½ hrs
<b>20</b>	Duncansby Head	64	Duncansby Head car park	ND 404733	2 to 3½ miles (3.2 to 5.6km)	260 to 705ft (80 to 215m)	1 to 2¼ hrs



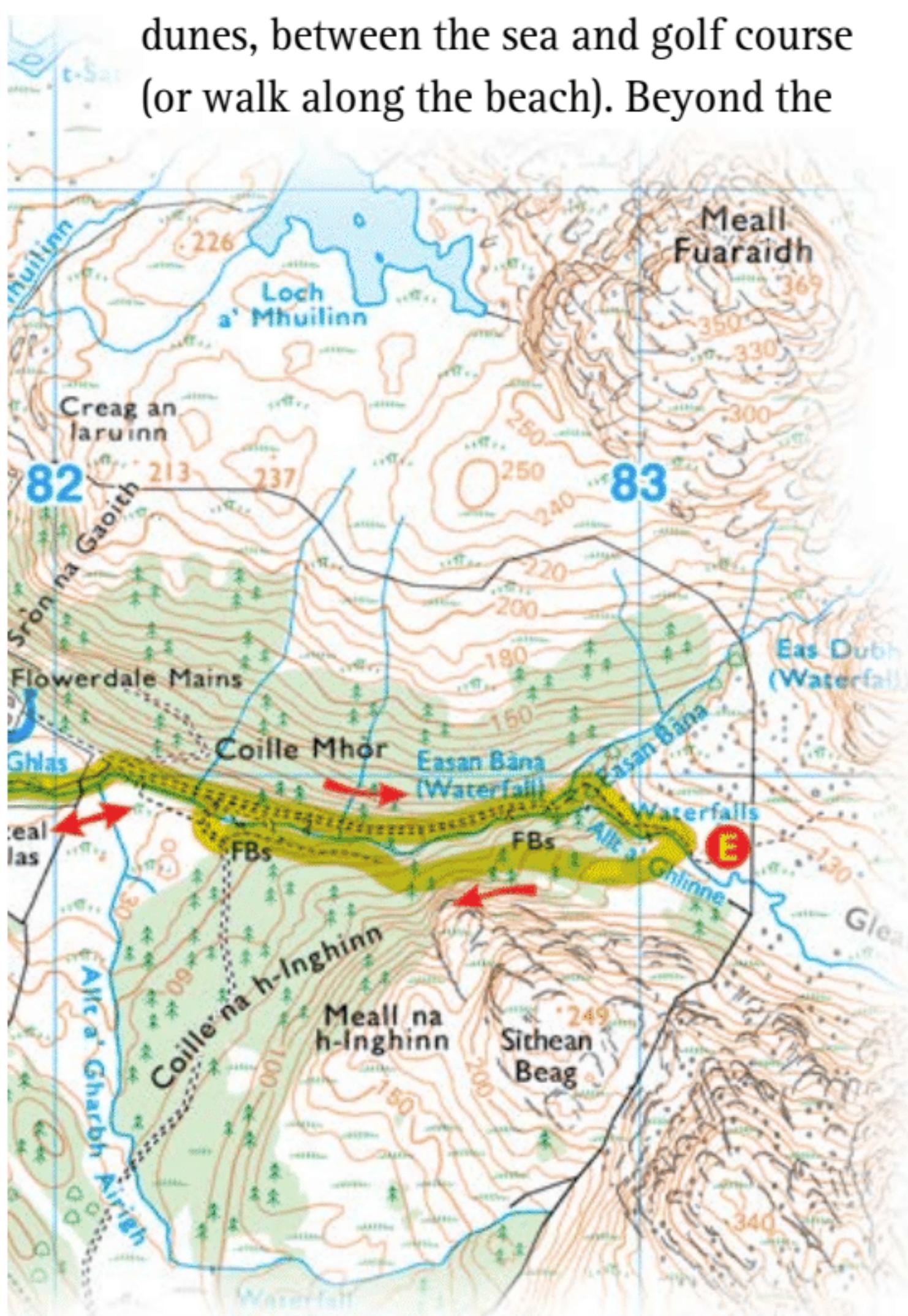
*The big beach of Gaineamh Mhòr*

the path descends, going right at a junction and entering native woodland before emerging above An Dùn, a promontory with traces of a prehistoric fort **A**. It is worth climbing onto the headland for the superb view over Gaineamh Mhòr, the big sandy beach at the south end of Gairloch.

Follow the path along the crest of the dunes, between the sea and golf course (or walk along the beach). Beyond the

clubhouse cross a small stream and turn right, past an old cemetery under trees. Walk through a car park and cross the main road to a lane on the left of the white church. At the end of a newer cemetery go through a gap in a fence **B**, keep left beside the fence then turn right following a grassy path through the open bottom of a wooded valley.

Enter trees at a T-junction of paths and turn left then immediately right over a footbridge. You are now on the Arboretum Circuit, which ends at the tarmac drive to Flowerdale House (turning right at the T-junction would lead you to the same spot). Cross over the drive to the path **C** that runs parallel to it and turn left (the start car park is 500 yards to the right). When level with Flowerdale House (screened from view) the path turns right down an avenue. Very soon turn left at a sign for the Waterfall Walk and pass the Island of Justice, where the Gairloch lairds held court until the 18th century. Continue on the path across two footbridges and through pleasant



SCALE 1:25000 or 2½ INCHES to 1 MILE 4CM to 1KM

# walk 5

 **Start**  
Coulin Estate, Torridon

 **Distance**  
6 miles (9.6km)

 **Height gain**  
420 feet (130m)

 **Approximate time**  
3 hours

 **Route terrain**  
Highland roads and  
good tracks and paths

 **Parking**  
Parking area on the  
A896, opposite the  
start of the Coulin  
Estate private road

 **OS maps**  
Landranger 25 (Glen  
Carron & Glen Affric),  
Explorer 433 (Torridon  
- Beinn Eighe &  
Liathach)

 **GPS waypoints**  
**A** NH 002 581  
**A** NH 004 566  
**B** NH 004 560  
**C** NH 018 546  
**D** NH 023 551  
**E** NH 013 556

# Loch Coulin circuit

*This relatively easy circuit is set in wild country where the Torridon mountains are reflected in two serene lochs on a calm day. The walk starts at the foot of Beinn Eighe and has stunning views of it and its neighbour Liathach as you return towards them along the loch shore. It passes lovely native woodland of Scots pine, birch and other species that is being restored and extended.*



The small parking area only holds about six vehicles and can fill up quickly; there is a larger car park above the road 2 miles (3.2km) west.

 From the parking area, take the Coulin Estate private road, which leads downhill to the south, soon going over a cattle grid. Cross the bridge over the A' Ghairbhe, which widens into a pool downstream. The tarmac road meets Loch Clair and runs through birch woodland just above the shore, with a dark mountain, Sgùrr Dubh, rising on the far side above a fringe of Scots pines. At the far end of the loch there is a junction under stately, mature pines **A**.





#### Cross-country distances from Inverness

By shortest route to	Via	miles	km
Kinlochewe	A832	51	82
Braemore Junction	A835	46	74
Ullapool	A835	58	93
Ledmore Junction	A837	69	111
Laxford Bridge	A838	86	138
Tongue	A836	86	138
Melvich	A897	102	164
Thurso	A9	110	177

- you will usually get a wave or a flash of the lights from the other driver to say thank you;
- do not travel in convoy (many passing places only have room for one vehicle);
- do not park in passing places (or field entrances);
- remember that these roads are vital for deliveries and emergency services, and are the only way to work, school, shops and medical appointments for local people.

#### NC500 approximate route distances

Section	miles	km
South: Inverness to Braemore Junction	185	297
North West: Braemore Junction to Durness	110	177
North: Durness to Wick	91	146
East: Wick to Inverness	114	183

#### South: Inverness to Braemore Junction

1	Loch Kinellan and Ordwood
2	Two Bridges circuit of the Black Water
3	Applecross Trails
4	Shieldaig Peninsula
5	Loch Coulin circuit
6	Beinn Eighe Mountain Trail
7	Gairloch and Flowerdale
8	Kernsary circuit from Poolewe

#### North West: Braemore Junction to Durness

9	Ullapool Hill and Loch Achall
10	Knockan Crag
11	Traligill Caves
12	Little Assynt
13	River Inver and Glencanisp Lodge
14	Sandwood Bay

#### North: Durness to Wick

15	Balnakeil Bay and Faraid Head
16	Ben Hope
17	Castle Varrich
18	Torrisdale Bay
19	Castletown Flagstone Trail
20	Duncansby Head

#### East: Wick to Inverness

21	Noss Head
22	Morven and Maiden Pap
23	Helmsdale Harbour and River
24	Ben Bhraggie
25	Loch Fleet and Balblair Wood
26	Ledmore and Migdale
27	The Seaboard Villages
28	The Fyrih Monument

Stay on the tarmac road, which turns right to cross a bridge over the river linking the two lochs (ahead is the return route). The road sweeps left beyond the bridge. Pass to the left of

two houses and estate buildings and ignore the track heading straight towards Coulin Lodge, an attractive large white house on the left. Stay on the tarmac to walk to its right, close to a traditional deer larder. Now continue ahead on a hard vehicle track, which leads all the way down Loch Coulin, soon going through a metal kissing-gate beside a cattle grid and vehicle gate **(B)**.

You are now walking through an area that has been protected by deer fences to encourage natural regeneration of native woodland and will meet several more gate and cattle grid combinations like this. The lower part of Loch Coulin is reedy and attractive to ducks and grebes. Once past a triangular headland, Torran Cuilinn, that extends from the far shore, the loch opens out into a wide expanse of water. Ahead a white house, Coulin, and a white cottage, Torran-

SCALE 1:25000 or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  INCHES to 1 MILE 4CM to 1KM



# Sandwood Bay

walk 14

 Start

Blairmore

 Distance

9¾ miles (15.6km)

 Height gain

1,245 feet (380m)

 Approximate time

5½ hours

 Route terrain

Lanes; moorland tracks and exposed clifftop paths; beach and dunes

 Parking

Blairmore car park; turn off the A838 at Rhiconich onto the B801 then turn right again at Kinlochbervie

 OS maps

Landranger 9 (Cape Wrath), Explorer 446 (Durness & Cape Wrath)

 GPS waypoints

-  NC 194 600
-  NC 189 606
-  NC 195 625
-  NC 201 638
-  NC 215 649
-  NC 219 650
-  NC 207 626



The start car park, which is beyond turnings to lovely beaches at Oldshoremore and Oldshore Beg, has public toilets and information. This entire walk is on land owned by the John Muir Trust, who manage it to protect and restore its special character.

Allow extra time to explore the beach and shores of Sandwood Loch. Take adequate clothing, food and water, plus a compass in case of poor visibility. If it is very windy or the cloud is right down, it is safer to avoid the cliff route.

 From the car park turn left along the road, almost immediately passing a sign for Balchrick, a crofting township with a few houses. Keep right past a turn to Droman Per and continue into the next little settlement, Sheigra. Keep ahead where a road runs left to the cemetery and beach. Beyond a few houses, the tarmac ends; continue ahead on a track signed Sheigra Peat Road and go through a gate **A**.

The track gently rises through grassy moorland. Higher up Loch na Gainimh comes into sight; the return route is on the far side. The track bends left around Cnoc Poll a' Mhurain and ends





SCALE 1:25,000 or 2½ INCHES to 1 MILE 4CM to 1KM

stay on the beach below the headland and rejoin the route at (B.).

You can see the northern half of the beach before the track bends away from

the sea and climbs through high sand dunes. It gradually curves back to the left and disappears under blown sand in a wide bowl bare of vegetation. Tyre

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